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The Child of Urbino

Raphael

By Louise de la Ramé

A THIRD READER

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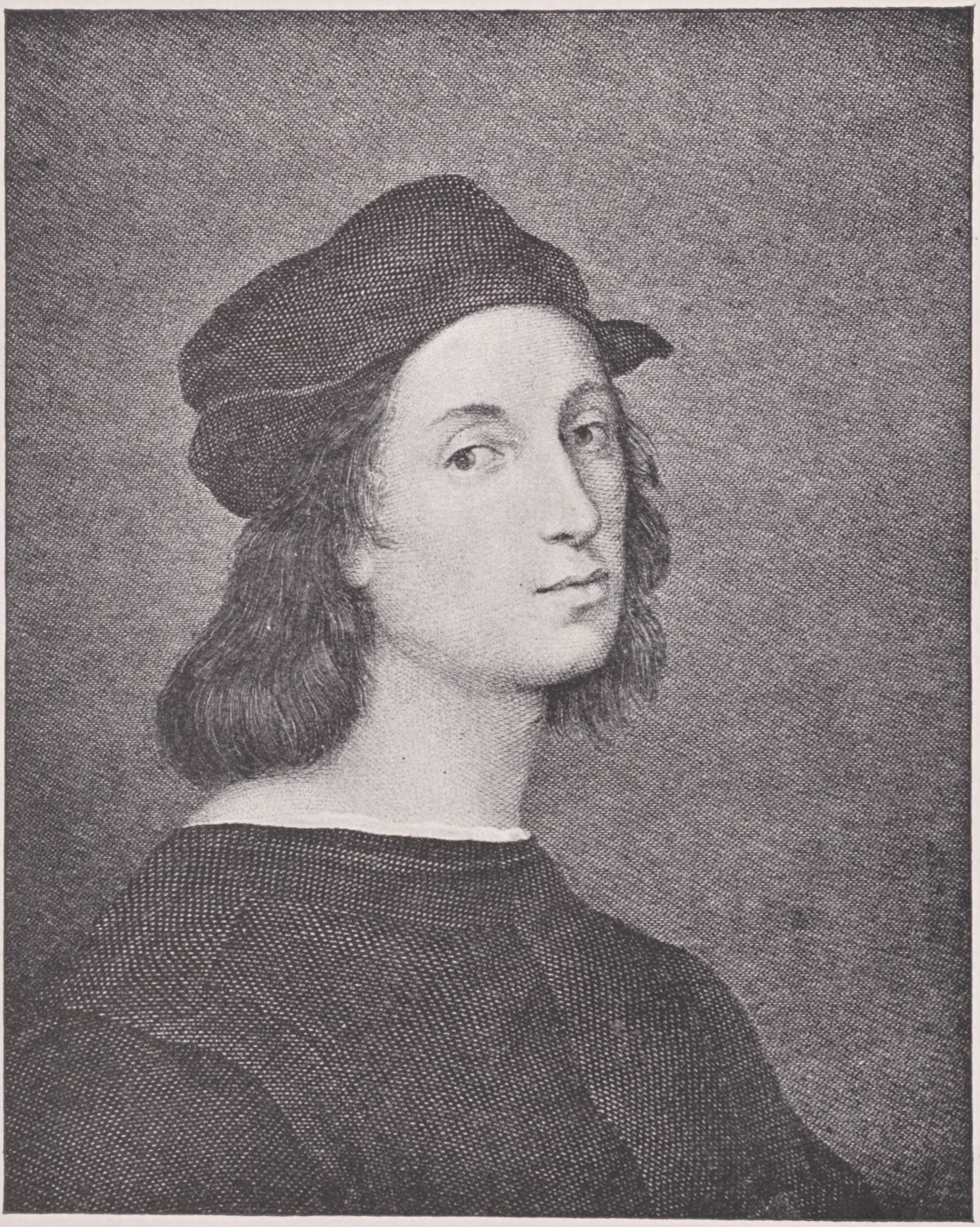


RAPHAEL

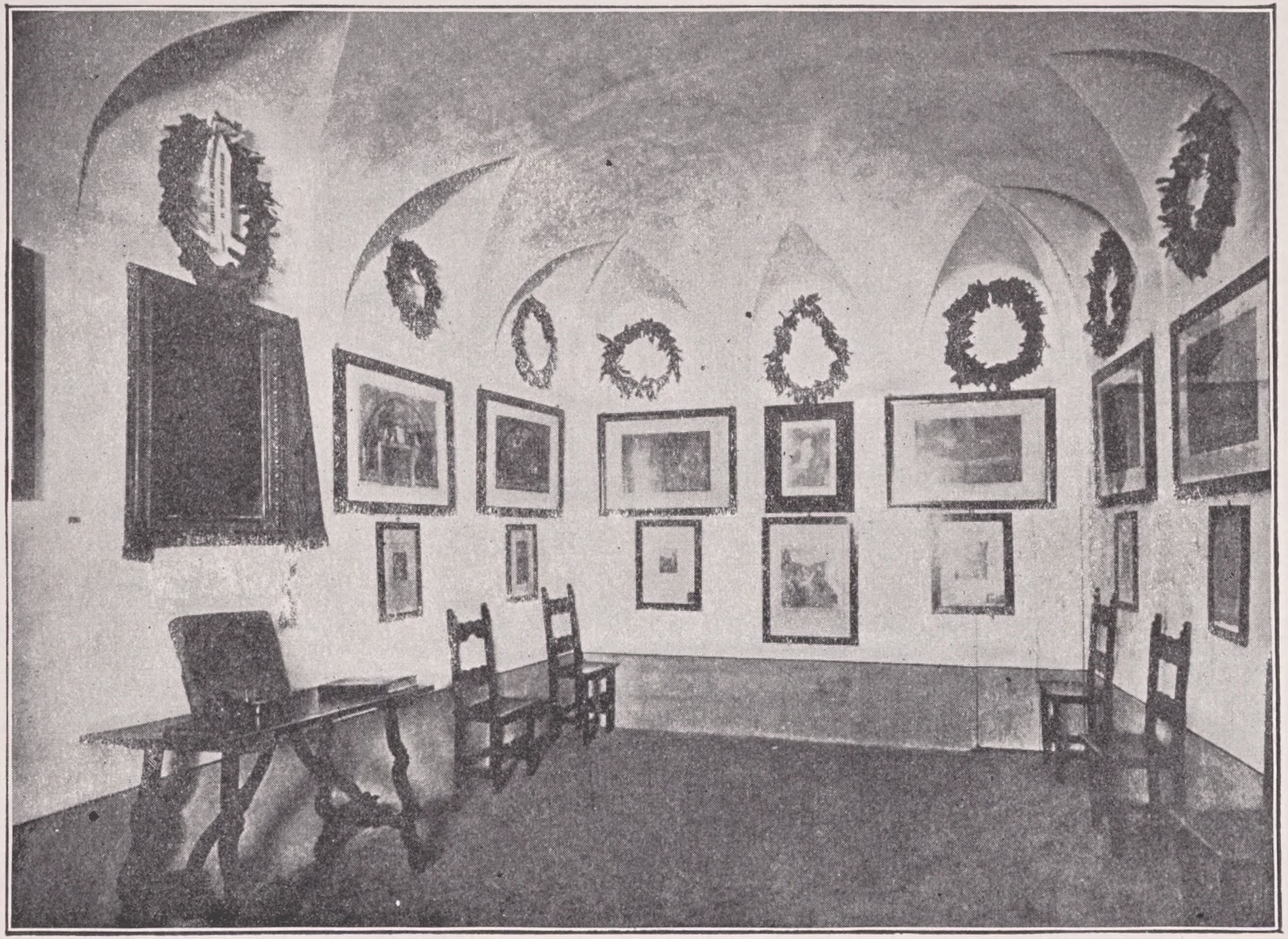
THE CHILD OF URBINO.

If you had lived in Urbino, Italy, in 1492, you might have played with a little boy named Raphael. In 1492, Columbus discovered America, and in that year, Raphael was nine years of age.

He was a pretty boy whose great hazel eyes looked out from under the golden hair cut straight across his brows. On this golden hair he wore a little round flat cap of sky blue. His little tunic was of the same lovely color, and the embroidered ruffles at his neck were snow white. He was a very happy boy. His family had come to home-like, kindly Urbino for safety and peace after war had ruined their home in the country. Raphael had the dearest, fondest, grandfather in all the world, a loving mother, and a very kind father, Giovanni Sanzio, an artist.

The little child was often painted among the angels in the pictures made by his father. Every hour of his life was spent among artists. His dearest friends were his paints and brushes. He lived in a home of art lovers, and breathed a love of beauty at every breath. The men and women about him loved art as they loved life.

It was good to live in old Urbino in those days. Then the poor man was friend to his prince and ruler. The peasant could go up to the palace, or stop the duke in the market place and be sure of a kind answer, and good advice. A true love of beautiful things, a sense of public duty, a loyal heart, and a wise content among the people made them thrifty and happy.



ROOM IN WHICH RAPHAEL WAS BORN, URBINO

All work was well done; living was cheap; food good and plentiful, much better and more plentiful, than it is now. In the fine old houses every stone was sound, every bit of ornament well wrought. Men made their houses to live in and to pass to their children and children's children after them. Their own fancies and their own traditions were recorded in the iron-work of their casements and in the wood-work of their doors. They had their happy day of honest toil from morning bell to evening song. They walked out, or sat about in the calm evening air and looked down on the plains rich with grain, and fruit, and woodland. They talked and laughed and were content in their own pleasant, useful lives, having no desire to be some one else.

Life must have been very good in those old days in old Urbino. Can you not picture to yourself good, wise Giovanni Sanzio, with his old father by his side, and his little son running before him, in the holy evening time of a feast-day, the deep church-bells swaying overhead, and the last sun-rays falling on the castle walls, the steep city rocks shelving down into the greenery of cherry-orchard and of pear-tree? I can; and whenever I shut my eyes and recall Urbino as it was, I wish it had been mine to live then in that mountain-home, and to meet that sweet, smiling child going along his happy way, gathering unconsciously in his infant soul all the beautiful sights and sounds around him, to give them in his manhood to the world.

"Let him alone; he will paint all this some day," said his wise father, who loved to think that his brushes and his colors would pass in time to Raphael, whose hands would be stronger to hold them than his own had been.

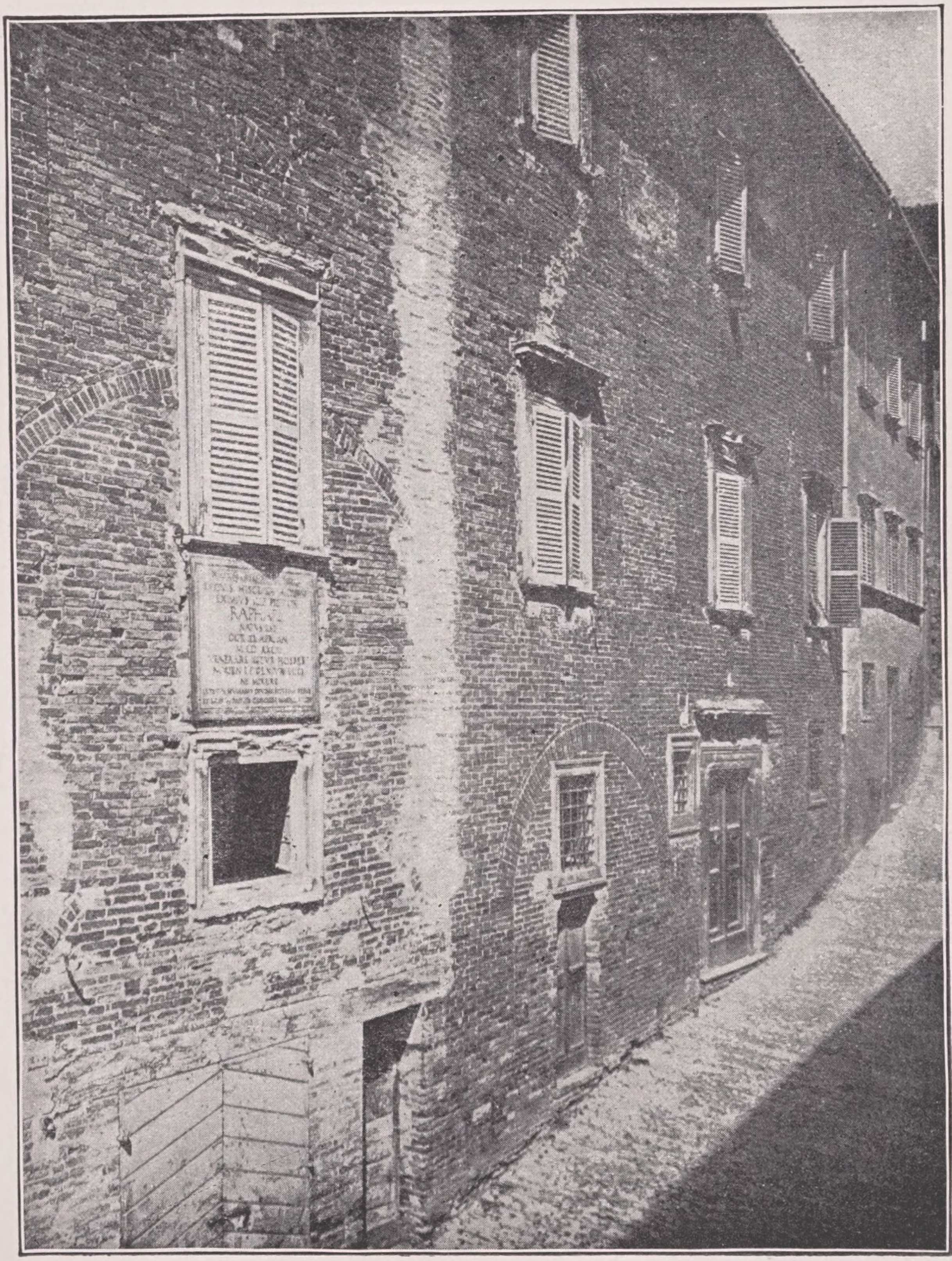
Whether he would ever paint it or not, the child never tired of looking on the rocks, and on all that passed below, under the growing corn and under the leafy orchard boughs.

There were so many things to be seen in Urbino in that time by one who looked over the vast green valley below! Perhaps it was a clump of spears, as men-at-arms rode through the trees; a string of market-folk bringing in the produce of the orchard or of the fields; a red-robed cardinal on a white mule, behind him a train rich with baggage, furniture, gold and silver plate; maybe the Duke's hunting-party going out or coming homeward with beautiful steeds and hounds, and hunting-horns sounding merrily over the green country; maybe a band of free lances, with plumes tossing, steel glancing, bannerets fluttering against the sky; or maybe a quiet, gray-robed string of monks or pilgrims singing the hymn sung before Jerusalem, and treading the long grass with sandalled feet, coming towards the city, to crowd slowly and gladly up its rocky height. Do you not wish with me you could have stood in the window with Raphael to see the earth as it was then?

No doubt the good folks of Urbino laughed and called him a little dreamer, so many hours did he stand looking, looking — only looking — as eyes have a right to do that see well. Happily for him his days of childhood were times of peace.

At this time Urbino was growing into fame for its work in pottery. The big dishes and bowls, the marriage-plates and jars which it made were beginning to rival the products of the neighboring towns and when the Duke wished to send a bridal gift, or a present on some festal occasion, he often chose a service or some rare platter of Urbino ware. Pottery had not then taken the high place among the arts of Italy that it was to take very soon. As you will learn when you are older, after the Greeks and the Christians had exhausted all that was beautiful in shape and substance of clay vases, the art seemed to die. The potters and the pottery-painters died with it, or went to sleep for a great many centuries. Now, during the reign of the good Duke, great Federigo, the potters and pottery-painters, with other gentle craftsmen, had begun to look up again, and the fires of their humble ovens had begun to burn in many towns and in Urbino itself. Jars and bowls and platters, oval dishes and ewers and basins, and big-bodied vases were being made and painted at Urbino while Raphael was running about on rosy baby feet.

There was a master-potter at that time, one Benedetto, whose name had not become world-renowned yet, who in that day enjoyed the honor of all the duchy, and did things very rare and fine in the Urbino ware. He was a gray-haired, handsome, somewhat stern and pompous man, now more than middle-aged, who had one beauteous daughter, by name Pacifica. Benedetto and Pacifica lived very near the home of Raphael. He cherished Pacifica well, but not so well as he cherished the things he wrought — the deep, round plates and oval dishes that he painted with Scriptural stories and strange devices, and landscapes such as those he saw around him. Sometimes his wares came ruined from the oven in which they had to be baked; and sometimes they were lovely with those lustrous and opaline hues which we



HOUSE IN WHICH RAPHAEL WAS BORN, URBINO

admire to this day as the especial glory of majolica.

Benedetto was an ambitious and vain man. He had had a hard, laborious manhood, working at his potter's wheel and painter's brush before Urbino ware was prized in Italy. Now, indeed, he was esteemed at his due worth, and his work was valued also. He was passably rich, and known as a good artist far beyond Urbino; but there was a younger man over at Gubbio, who surpassed him, and made him sleep less, as envy makes all those who take envy as a bedfellow.

The house of Benedetto was a long stone building, with a loggia at the back, overrun with hardy rose-trees. It looked on a garden that was more than half orchard, in which grew abundantly pear-trees, plum-trees, and wild strawberries. The windows of his workshop looked on all this quiet greenery. There were many such pleasant workshops then in the land — calm, godly, homelike places, filled from without with song of birds and scent of herbs and blossoms. Nowadays men work in crowded cities, in close factory chambers; and their work is as barren as their lives.

The little Raphael ran in and out of this big, wide house and garden of Benedetto at his pleasure, for Pacifica was always glad to see him, and even the sombre master-potter often taught him how to lay the color on the tremulous unbaked pottery.

Pacifica was a lovely young woman of eighteen years; and perhaps Raphael was but remembering her when in manhood he painted the face of his *Madonna di San Sisto.* He loved her as he loved everything that was beautiful, and every one who was kind. Almost better than his own beloved father's studio, almost better than his dear old grandsire's cheerful little shop, did he love this grave, silent, sweet-smelling, sun-pierced, shadowy old house, the home of Pacifica.

Benedetto had four apprentices or pupils at that time learning the art, but the one whom Raphael liked the most (and whom Pacifica liked, too) was Luca Torelli. He was a youth of a noble, dark, pensive beauty, a fearless gait, a supple, tall, slender figure that would have looked well in the light coat of mail and silken doublet of a man-at-arms. The spirit of Luca was more indeed for war and its risks and glories than for the wheel and the brush of the potter; but he had loved Pacifica ever since he had come down one careless holy-day into Urbino, and had bound himself to her father's service in a heedless moment of eagerness to breathe the same air and to dwell under the same roof.

He had, however, gained little for his pains. To see her at mass and at meal-times, now and then to be allowed to bring water from the well for her, or to feed her pigeons, to see her gray gown go down between the orchard trees and catch the sunlight, to hear the hum of her spinning-wheel, the thrum of her viol — this was all he got of joy in two long years. How he envied Raphael running along the stone floor of the loggia, to leap into her arms, to hang upon her skirts, picking the summer fruit with her, and sorting with her the autumn herbs for drying!

"I love Pacifica!" he would say, with a groan, to Raphael; and Raphael would say, with a smile, "Ah, Luca, so do I!"

"It is not the same thing, my dear," sighed Luca; "I want her for my wife."

"I shall have no wife; I shall marry myself to painting," said Raphael, with a little grave wise face looking out from under the golden roof of his fair hair. He never tired of watching his father painting the saints with their branch of palm on their ground of blue or of gold, or of Benedetto making the dull clay glow with angels' wings, and prophets' robes, and holy legends told in color.

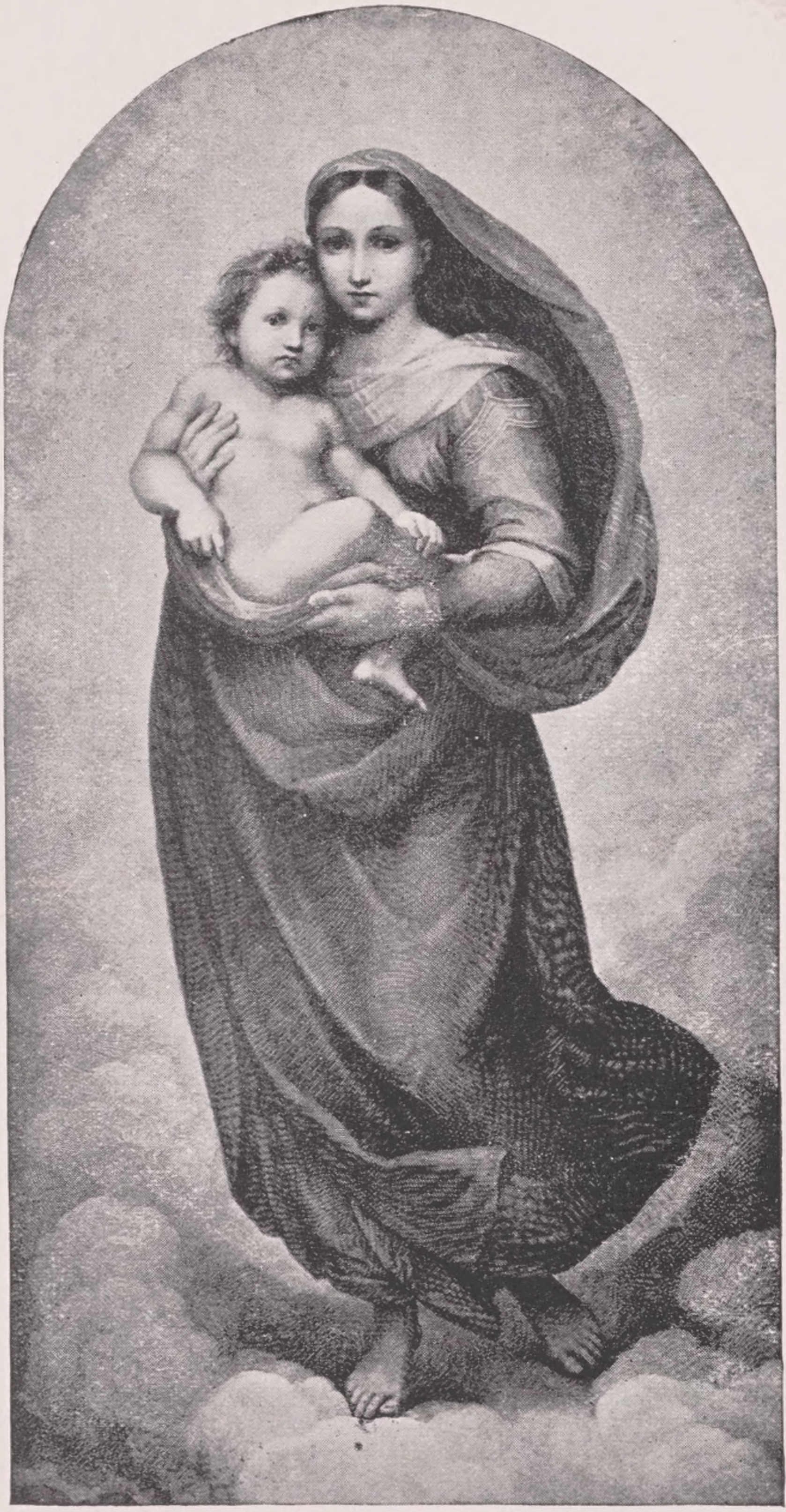
One day Raphael was standing at his favorite window in the potter's house. His friend, the handsome black-browed Luca, who was also standing there, sighed so deeply and so sadly that the child was startled from his dreams.

"Good Luca, what ails you?" he murmured, winding his arms about the young man's knees.

"Oh, 'Faello!" mourned the apprentice, woefully. "Here is such a chance to win the hand of Pacifica if only I had talent. If the good Lord had only gifted me with a master's skill, instead of all this bodily strength and sinew, like a wild hog of the woods, which avails me nothing here!"

"What chance is it?" asked Raphael, "and what is there new about Pacifica? She told me nothing, and I was with her an hour."

"Dear, simple one, she knows nothing of it," said Luca, heaving another sigh from his heart's depths. "A new order has come in this very forenoon, from the Duke; he wishes a dish and a jar of the very finest and firmest majolica to be painted with the story of Queen Esther, and made ready in three months from this date, to go as his gifts to his cousin. He has ordered that no cost be spared in the work, but that the



MADONNA DI SAN SISTO *Raphael*

painting thereof be the best that can be produced, and the prize he will give is fifty scudi. Now, Benedetto, having known some time, it seems, of this order, has had made in readiness several large oval dishes and beautiful big jars. He will give one to each of his pupils — to myself, to Berengario, to Tito, and to Zenone. The master is sorely vexed that his eyesight will not permit him to execute himself the Duke's commands. It is no secret that the fortunate winner of the Duke's approbation shall become partner here, and shall have the hand of Pacifica. Some say that Benedetto has only put forth this promise as a stimulus to get the best work done; but I know the master too well to deem him guilty of any such trick. What he has said he will carry out; if the vase and the dish win the Duke's praise, they will also win Pacifica. Now you see, dear 'Faello, why I am so sad of heart. I am a good craftsman enough at the wheel and the furnace, and I like the handling and moulding of the clay, but at painting clay I am not skilful, and Berengario or even the little Zenone will beat me; of that I am sure."

Raphael heard all this in silence, leaning his elbows on his friend's knee, and his chin on the palms of his own hands. He knew that the other pupils were better painters by far than his Luca, though not one of them was so good-hearted or noble-looking, and for none of them did the maiden Pacifica care.

"How long a time is given for the jar and the dish to be ready?" he asked, at length.

"Three months," said Luca, with a sigh sadder than ever. "But if it were three years, what difference would it make? You cannot cudgel art into a man with blows as you cudgel speed into a mule, and I shall be a dolt at the end of the time, as I am now. What said your good father to me but yesternight? — and he is good to me and does not despise me. He said, 'Luca, my son, it is of no more avail for you to sigh for Pacifica than to sigh for the moon. Were she mine I would give her to you, for you have a heart of gold, but Signor Benedetto will not; for never, I fear me, will you be able to decorate anything more than an apothecary's mortar or a barber's basin. If I hurt you, take it not ill; I mean kindness, and were I a stalwart youth like you I would try my fortunes in France or in Spain, or down in Rome, for you are made for a soldier.' That was the best even your father could say for me, ' Faello."

"But Pacifica," said the child — "Pacifica would not wish you to join the army!"

"God knows," said Luca, hopelessly. "Perhaps she would not care."

"I am sure she would," said Raphael, "for she does love you, Luca, though she cannot say so, being but a girl, and Signor Benedetto against you. That redcap you tamed for her, how she loves it! how she caresses it! and half is for you, Luca, half for the bird!"

Luca kissed him, but the tears rolled down the poor youth's face, for he was much in earnest and filled with despair.

"Even if she did, if she do," he murmured, hopelessly, "she never will let me know it, since her father forbids a thought of me; and now here is this trial of skill at the Duke's order come to make things worse. If that swaggering Berengario win, then truly will I join the army and pray heaven send me swift death and a shroud."

Raphael was very pensive for a while; then he raised his head and said:

"I have thought of something, Luca. But I do not know whether you will let me try it."

"You angel child! What would Luca deny to you? But as for helping me, my dear, put that thought out of your little mind forever, for no one can help me, 'Faello, not the saints themselves, since I was born a dolt!"

Raphael kissed him, and said, "Now listen!" And the child whispered something in the ear of Luca which we must not yet know. The story will tell it.

A few days later Signor Benedetto informed his pupils of the Duke's command and of his own intentions; he did not pronounce his daughter's name to the youths, but he spoke in terms that were clear enough to tell them that whoever had the good fortune and high merit to gain the Duke's choice should have the honor of becoming the associate of Benedetto in the famous business.

Now, it had been known in Urbino ever since Pacifica had gone to her first communion that whoever pleased her father well enough to become his partner must also please the maiden as her husband. Not much attention was given to girls' wishes in those times, and no one thought the master-potter either unjust or cruel in thus suiting himself before he suited his daughter. What made the hearts of all the young men quake and sink the lowest was the fact that Signor Benedetto made the offer not only to his own apprentices, but to any native of the duchy of Urbino. Who could tell what hero might step forth and gain the great prize of this fair hand of

RAPHAEL DRAWING THE MADONNA OF THE CHAIR *Wittmer*

Pacifica's? With her hand would go many a broad gold ducat, and heritage of the wide old gray stone house, and many an old jewel and old brocade that were kept there in dusky sweet-smelling cabinets. More than one good piece of land, smiling with corn and fruit-trees, outside the gates to the westward would be given also.

Luca, indeed, never thought of these things, but the other pupils did, and other youths as well. Had it not been for the limitation as to birth within the duchy, many a gallant young painter from the other side of the Apennines, many from the workshops of fair Florence herself, or from the Lombard cities, might have traveled there in hot haste as fast as horses could carry them, to paint the clay for the sake of so precious a reward. Urbino men they had to be however, and poor Luca, who was so full of despair that he could almost have thrown himself headlong from the rocks, was thankful that the number of his rivals was even thus limited.

"Had I been you," Giovanni Sanzio ventured once to say respectfully to Signor Benedetto, "I think I should have picked out for my son-in-law the best youth that I knew, not the best painter; for, my friend, the greatest artist is not always the truest man, and by the hearth-stone humble virtue should have high claim."

Benedetto set his stern face like a flint, knowing very well what youth Giovanni would have liked to have named to him.

"I have need of a good artist to keep up my fame," he said, stiffly. "My eyesight is not what it was, and I should be loath to see Urbino ware fall back, while wares from other cities gain ground every day. Pacifica must pay for being the daughter of a great artist."

Mirthful, keen-witted Sanzio smiled to himself, and went his way in silence; for he did not bow down before the vain old master potter.

"Poor Pacifica!" he thought, "if only my 'Faello were but ten years older!"

He, who could not forsee the future, the splendid, wondrous, unequalled future that awaited his young son, wished nothing better for him than a peaceful painter's life here in old Urbino, under the friendly shadow of the palace-walls.

Meanwhile, where think you was Raphael? Half the day, or all the day, and every day, whenever he could? Where think you he was? In the attic of Luca, before a bowl and a dish almost as big as himself. The attic was a breezy, naked place, underneath the arches supporting the roof of Benedetto's dwelling. Each pupil had one of these garrets to himself — a rare boon, for which Luca came to be very thankful, for without it he could not have sheltered his angel; for the secret that Raphael had whispered to him that day was, "Let *me* try to paint it."

For a long time Luca had been afraid to consent, he had only kept from laughter at the idea because of love and reverence for the little speaker. Baby Raphael, who was only just nine years old as the April tulips reddened, painting a majolica dish and vase to go to Mantua! The good fellow could scarcely restrain his laughter at the fancy; and nothing had kept him grave but the sight of that serious face of Raphael, looking up with serene, sublime self-confidence, nay, perhaps, rather, confidence in heaven and in heaven's gifts.

"Let me try!" said the child a hundred times. He would tell no one, only Luca should know; and if he failed—well, there would only be the spoiled pottery to pay for, and had he not two whole ducats? The Duke had given them to him when the court had come to see his father's designs for the altar-frescoes.

So utterly in earnest was he, and so intense and blank was Luca's despair, that the young man had promised to let the child try. "Never can I do aught," he thought, bitterly, looking at his own clumsy designs. "And sometimes by the help of cherubs the saints work miracles."

"It will be no miracle," said Raphael, hearing him murmur this: "it will be myself, and that which the dear God has put into me."

From that hour, Luca let him do what he would, and through all the lovely early summer days the child came and shut himself up in the garret, and studied, and thought, and worked, and knitted his pretty fair brows, and smiled in satisfaction, according to the mood he was in and the progress of his labors.

Giovanni Sanzio went away at that time to paint an altar-piece, and his little son for once was glad of the absence. His father would surely have remarked the long visits of Raphael to the attic, and would, in all likelihood, have obliged him to pore over his Latin or to take exercise in the open fields; but his mother said nothing, content that he should be amused and safe, and knowing well that Pacifica loved him and would let him come to no harm under her roof. Pacifica herself wondered that he deserted her for the garret. But one day when she questioned him, the sweet-faced rogue clung to her and murmured, "Oh, Pacifica, I do want Luca to win you, because he loves you so; and I do love you both!" She answered him, "Ah, dear, if he could!" and then said never a word more, but went to her distaff; Raphael saw great tears fall from her lashes to the flax.

She thought the child went to the attic to watch how Luca painted, and loved him more than ever for that, but knew in the hopelessness of her heart — as Luca also knew it in his — that the good and gallant youth would never be able to create anything that would go as the Duke's gifts to the Gonzaga of Mantua. She did love Luca! She had spoken to him but rarely, yet passing in and out of the same doors, and going to the same church offices, and dwelling always beneath the same roof, he had found means for a word, for a flower, for a glance. He was so handsome, so brave, and so gentle, that poor Pacifica cared not in the least whether he could paint or not. He could make her happy.

In the attic Raphael passed the most anxious hours of all his sunny little life. He would not allow Luca to look at what he did. He barred the door and worked; when he went away he locked his work in a wardrobe. The swallows came in and out of the unglazed window, and fluttered all around him; the morning sunbeams came in too, and made a halo round his golden head, like that which his father gilded above the heads of saints. Raphael worked on, not looking up, though clang of trumpet, or of cymbal, often told him there was much going on worth seeing down below. He was only nine years of age, but he labored

RAPHAEL IN HIS STUDIO

as earnestly as if he were man grown, his little rosy fingers gripping that pencil which was to make him in life and in death famous as kings are not famous, and let his tender body lie in its last sleep in the Pantheon of Rome.

He had covered hundreds of sheets with designs before he succeeded in getting the ideas that haunted him. When he had pleased himself at last, he set to work to transfer his drawings to the clay in color in the enamel that marks Urbino majolica.

Ah, how glad he was now that his father had let him draw from the time he was two years of age, and that Benedetto had shown him something of the mysteries of painting on clay and producing the lustre which was the glory of the pottery of the duchy!

How glad he was, and how his little heart bounded and seemed to sing in this his first enjoyment of the joyous liberty and power of creative work!

A well-known writer has said that genius is the power of taking pains; he should have said rather that genius *has* this power, but that first and foremost it possesses the power of exquisite production without effort and with delight.

Luca looked at him, not at his work, for Raphael had made him promise not to do so, and began to marvel at the child's intentness, the evident ease with which he worked. The little figure, leaning over the great dish on the bare board of the table, with the oval opening of the window and the blue sky beyond it, began to grow sacred with more than the sanctity of childhood. Raphael's face grew very serious, too, and lost its color. His hazel eyes looked very big, and grave and dark.

"Perhaps his father will be angry with me if ever he knows," thought poor Luca; but it was too late now. The child had become master.

So Raphael, unknown to anyone else, worked on and on in the attic, while the tulips bloomed and withered, and the honeysuckle was in flower in the hedges, and the wheat and barley were being cut in the quiet fields in the sunshine. For midsummer was come; of the three months all but a week had passed. It was known that all was ready for the Duke's choice.

One afternoon Raphael took Luca by the hand and said to him, "Come."

He led the young man up to the table, beneath the window, where he had passed so many of the ninety days of spring and summer.

Luca uttered a great cry, and stood gazing, gazing, gazing. Then he fell on his knees and embraced the little feet of the child. It was the first homage that he, whose life became one beautiful song of praise, received from man.

" Dear Luca," he said, softly, " do not do that. If it be indeed good, let us thank God."

His friend saw the great oval dish and the great vase standing with the sunbeams full upon them. They shone with lustrous hues and wondrous flame-like glories, gleaming like melted jewels. There were all manner of graceful symbols and classic designs wrought upon them. Their borders were garlanded with cherubs and flowers, bearing the arms of the Duke. The landscapes were the tender scenes round about Urbino. The mountains had the solemn radiance that the Apennines wore at evening-time, and amidst the figures there was one white-robed, golden-crowned Esther, to whom the child painter had given the face of Pacifica. This wondrous creation, wrought by a baby's hand, had safely passed the fire of the furnace, and had come forth without spot or flaw.

Luca ceased not from kneeling at the feet of Raphael, as ever since has knelt the world.

"Oh, wondrous boy! Oh, angel sent unto men!" sighed the poor apprentice, as he gazed; and his heart was so full that he burst into tears.

"Let us thank God," said little Raphael, again; and he joined his small hands that had wrought this miracle, and said his *Laus Domini.*

When the precious jar and the great platter were removed to the wardrobe and shut up in safety behind the steel wards of the locker, Luca said, timidly, feeling twenty years in age behind the wisdom of this gifted child, " But, dearest boy, I do not see how your marvellous and most exquisite work can help me. Even if you would allow it to pass as mine, I could not accept such a thing. It would be a fraud, a shame. Not even to win Pacifica could I consent."

" Be not so hasty, good friend," said Raphael. " Wait just a little longer yet and see. I have my own idea. Do trust in me."

" Heaven speaks in you, that I believe," said Luca, humbly.

Raphael answered not, but ran down-stairs, and passing Pacifica, threw his arms about her in more than his usual affectionate caresses.

"Pacifica, be of good heart," he murmured, and would not be questioned, but ran homeward to his mother.

"Can it be that Luca has done well?" thought Pacifica; but she feared the child's wishes had outrun his wisdom. He could not be a judge, a child of nine years, even though he were the son of that good, honest painter and poet, Giovanni Sanzio.

The next morning was Midsummer Day. Now, the pottery was all to be placed in the house of Signor Benedetto; and the Duke was to come and make his choice. The master-potter, because he liked to affect a mighty indifference and to show he had no favoritism, had declared that he would not himself see the works of art until the eyes of the Duke also fell upon them.

As for Pacifica, she had locked herself

alone in her chamber. The young men were swaggering about, and taunting each other, and boasting. Luca sat apart, thrumming an old lute. Giovanni Sanzio, who had ridden home at evening, came in from his own house and put his hand on the youth's shoulder.

" Luca, I hear the men have brought fine things. Take courage, my lad. Maybe we can entreat the Duke to change the mind of Pacifica's father."

Luca shook his head wearily.

There would be one beautiful thing there, indeed, he knew; but what use would that be to him ?

" The child — the child "— he stammered, and then remembered that he must not tell Raphael's secret.

" My child ?" said Signor Giovanni. "Oh, he will be here ; he will be sure to be here : where-ever there is a painted thing to be seen, there always is Raphael."

Then the good man sauntered within to speak to Benedetto, who, in a suit of fine crimson with doublet of sad-colored velvet, was standing ready to advance bare-headed into the street as soon as the hoofs of the Duke's charger should strike on the stones.

"You must be anxious in your thoughts," said Signor Giovanni to him. "They say a youth from Pesaro brings something fine: if you should find yourself bound to take a stranger into your work-room and your home."—

"If he be a man of genius he will be welcome." "Be he of Pesaro, or of Fano, or of Castel-Durante, I go not back from my word: I keep my word even to my own hindrance."

"Let us hope it will bring you only joy," said his neighbor, who knew him to be an honest man and true, even if over-obstinate and vain.

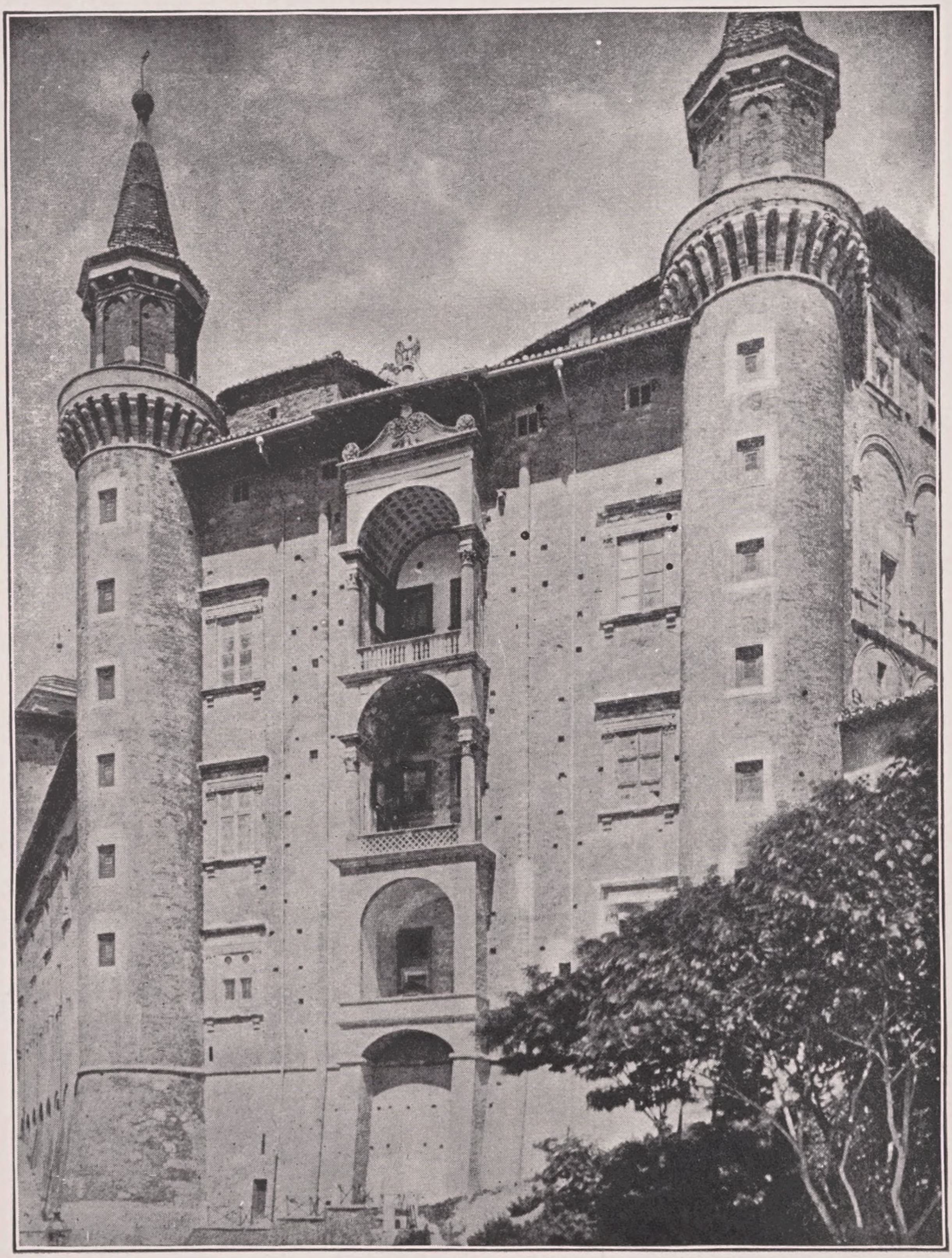
"Our Lord the Duke!" shouted the people standing in the street. Benedetto walked out with stately tread to receive the honor of his master's visit.

Raphael slipped noiselessly to his father's side, and tightly held his hand.

"You are not surely afraid of our good Duke!" said his father with a laugh and some surprise, for Raphael was very pale, and his lower lip trembled.

"No," said the child, simply.

The young Duke and his court came riding down the street, and paused before the old stone house of the master-potter, splendid gentlemen, though only in their morning dress,



DUCAL PALACE, URBINO

the noble Barbary steeds fretting under them, and the little pages and liveried servants about their steps. Usually, unless he went hunting or on a visit to some nobleman, the Duke walked about Urbino like any of the citizens; but he knew the pompous and somewhat vainglorious temper of Benedetto, and good-naturedly was willing to humor its harmless vanities. Bowing to the ground, the master-potter led the way, walking backward into his shop. The courtiers followed their Duke. Giovanni Sanzio with his little son and a few other persons went in also at due distance. At the farther end of the workshop stood the pupils and the artists from other places in the duchy whose works were there to be judged. In all there were ten competitors. Poor Luca, who had set his own work on the table with the rest, as he was obliged to do, stood, to hide

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his misery, behind all, shrinking back into the shadow of the deep-bayed window.

On the narrow benches that served as tables on working-days to the pottery-painters were ranged the dishes and jars, with a number attached to each — no name to any, because Benedetto was to prove his honesty in the matter of choice: he wished for the best artist. The Duke, doffing his plumed cap, walked down the long room and examined each plate and vase in its turn. On the whole, the collection made a fine display of majolica, though he was perhaps a little disappointed at the result in each, for he wanted something uncommon and absolutely perfect. Still, with fair words he complimented Signor Benedetto on the show, and only before the work of poor Luca was he entirely silent, since indeed silence was the greatest kindness he could show to it. The drawing was bold and regular, but the coloring was hopelessly crude and glaring.

At last, before a vase and a dish that stood modestly at the very farthest end of the bench, the Duke gave a sudden exclamation of delight, and Benedetto grew crimson with pleasure and surprise. Raphael's father pressed a little nearer and tried to see over the shoulders of the gentlemen of the court, feeling sure that something rare and beautiful must have called forth that cry of wonder from the Grand Duke. He saw at a glance that for his poor friend Luca there was no hope.

"This is beyond all comparison," said the Duke, taking the great oval dish up reverently in his hands. "Benedetto, I am glad that you should possess such a pupil. He will be a glory to our beloved Urbino."

"It is indeed most excellent work, my Lord Duke," said the master-potter, who was trembling with surprise and dared not show all the astonishment and emotion he felt at the discovery of so exquisite a creation in his studio. "It must be," he added, for he was a very honest man, "the work of one of the lads of Pesaro. I have no such craftsman in my workshop. It is beautiful exceedingly!"

"It is worth its weight in gold!" said the Duke. "Look gentlemen — look! Will not the fame of Urbino be borne beyond the Apennines and Alps?"

Then, the court and the citizens came to look, and said that truly never in Urbino had they seen such painting on majolica.

"But whose is it?" said the Duke impatiently, casting his eyes over the gathered group of apprentices and artists. "Benedetto, I pray you, the name of the artist; I pray you, quick!"

"It is marked number eleven, my lord," answered the master-potter. "Ho, you who reply to that number, stand out and give your name. My Lord Duke has chosen your work. Ho, there! do you hear me?"

But not one of the group moved. The young men looked from one to another. Who was this nameless rival? There were but ten of themselves.

"Ho, there!" repeated Signor Benedetto, getting angry. "Cannot you find a tongue, I say? Who has wrought this work? Silence is but insolence to his Highness and to me!"

Then the child Raphael loosened his little hand from his father's, and went forward, and stood before the master-potter.

"I painted it," he said, with a pleased smile. "I, Raphael."

Can you not fancy, without telling, the confusion, the wonder, the unbelief, the questions, the wild praise, that followed the discovery of the child artist? Only the presence of the Duke kept it in anything like quiet. Even he, all duke though he was, felt his eyes wet and his heart swell; for he himself was childless, and for the joy that Giovanni Sanzio felt that day he would have given his crown and duchy.

He took from his own breast a jewel hung on a gold chain and threw it over Raphael's shoulders.

"There is your first prize," he said; "you will have many, oh, wondrous child, and shall live when we are dust!"

Raphael, himself quite tranquil and unmoved, kissed the Duke's hand with sweetest grace, and then turned to his own father.

"Is it true that I have won my Lord Duke's prize?"

"Quite true, my angel!" said Giovanni Sanzio, with tremulous voice.

Raphael looked up at Benedetto.

"Then I claim the hand of Pacifica!"

There was a smile on all the faces round, even on the darker countenances of the other painters.

"Oh, would indeed you were of age to be my son by marriage, as you are the son of my heart!" murmured Signor Benedetto. "Dear and marvellous child, you are but jesting, I know. Tell me what it is indeed that you would have. I could deny you nothing; and truly it is you who are my master."

"I am your pupil," said Raphael, with that pretty serious smile of his, his little fingers playing with the ducal jewel. "I could never have painted that majolica yonder had you not taught me the secrets and management of your colors. Now, dear master mine, and you, oh, my Lord Duke, do hear me! I, by the terms of the contest, have won the hand of Pacifica. I take these rights, and give them over to my dear friend Luca, because he is the honestest man in all the world. He honors Signor Benedetto and loves Pacifica as no other can and Pacifica loves him. My Lord Duke, will you not say that thus all will be well?"

With the grave, innocent courage of a child he spoke — this nine-year-old painter, who was greater than any there.

Benedetto stood mute, sombre, agitated.

Luca had sprung forward and dropped on one knee. He was pale with anxiety. Raphael looked at him with a smile.

"My Lord Duke," he said, with his little gentle smile, "you have chosen my work; defend me in my rights."

"Listen to the voice of an angel, my good Benedetto; heaven speaks by him," said the Duke, gravely, laying his hand on the arm of of his master-potter.

Harsh Signor Benedetto burst into tears.

"I can refuse him nothing," he said, with a sob. "He will give such glory unto Urbino as never the world hath seen!"

"Call down this fair Pacifica whom Raphael has won," said the Duke, "and I myself will give her as a dower as many gold pieces as we can cram into this famous vase. An honest youth loves her and she loves him—

what better can you do, Benedetto? Young man, rise up and be happy."

But Luca heard not. He was still kneeling at the feet of Raphael, where the world has knelt ever since.

VOCABULARY.

Apennines (ap′e-nīnz)
Benedetto (bā-nā-det′tō)
Berengario (bā-ren-gä rē-ō]
Castel-Durante (käs-tel′dö-rän′te)
Federigo (fā-dā-rē′gō)
Fano (fä′nō)
Giovanni Sanzio (jō-vän′nē sän′sē-ō)
Gonzaga (gon-zä′gä)
Gubbio (göb′bē-ō)
Loggia (lōj′jä)
Mantua (man′tū-ä)
Pantheon (pan′thē-on)
Pesaro (pā-sä rō)
Raphael (rä′fā-el)
Urbino (ör-bē′nō)

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